

Heartache (Like When I Was Young) by cotsponlon

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Summary:

It's 3 am at the Derry Townhouse, and Richie can't sleep. He gets a call from Eddie, who is right downstairs.

1. Chapter 1

It had been two months and a cancelled tour and Richie couldn't bring himself to leave. As he lay in his bed in the townhouse, staring at the gaudy decorations of ceiling and walls, he could feel the electricity of Derry. It had an energy that he couldn't describe, a magnetism despite all the horrors he had seen. Whatever it was, it kept him up almost all night. He was alive, and he wasn't alone, against all odds. Still, several of his friends, even if temporarily, had scattered to the winds. Ben and Beverly had left together to start over, and Bill to return to his wife and career. Only Mike and Eddie remained, and even Mike had plans to travel. Richie knew his friend had a desire to see everything he hadn't let himself see in the 27 years he'd stayed behind. If anyone deserved a break, it was Mike Hanlon.

That left Eddie. The man was mostly recovered. The scar through his middle was visible and large, but healing quickly enough that he was able to leave the hospital. He had returned to the townhouse, and as far as Richie knew, he was staying there while he decided the next step. Of anyone, Eddie left the least behind at home. Richie didn't have to ask. He knew Eddie well enough to see the worry in his eyes at the thought of leaving Derry again.

Richie wanted to reach out, somehow. Every time he'd made attempt at sincerity, he had faltered, and it had come out as a joke. It had all been any variation of "Eddie, I fucked your mom", or a jab at his height ("Don't worry Eds, puberty comes at different times for everyone. You'll grow into your looks, I swear.") But now Eddie had been hurt, and Richie had watched the the life nearly drain out of his eyes. He was weaker than he'd ever been, and it hurt the other man to see him that way. What was he supposed to do? Richie knew how to care, he knew how to listen. People didn't give him the chance enough. But he had trouble finding the right things to say when he really needed to. Even so, he had been subconsciously thinking of Eddie for so long, even in the years he couldn't remember. It flooded back the second he saw him in Jade of the Orient. They were kids again.

The two had spent a surprising amount of evenings together since Eddie got out of the hospital, sitting down in cheap burger places to talk for hours, laughing at stupid movies on TV at the townhouse, and even walking through the town. When they did so, it was either in soft conversation, or comfortable silence. It was getting colder, and they often ended up with their shoulders touching as they sat. It was a gesture of familiarity.

But tonight, Richie was alone. It was 3 am, and he assumed he was the only one awake. The occasional car passed outside, or the old building shifted and creaked. Beyond that, silence. But when a loud vibration told him he was getting a call, he reached for the nightstand, put his glasses on, and squinted.

Eddie Spaghetti

He fumbled to touch the screen. Worry crept into his mind no matter how hard he tried to push it away, and Richie Tozier was an expert at pushing things away

“Eds?”

There was some shuffling on the other end. “Hey, Rich.”

“Um, you okay? I just, I mean, it’s 3 am, and-“

“No no no yeah I know, I...fuck, I’m sorry.”

“Whoah whoah buddy, what’s up? Slow down, back up.”

Eddie was crying. Richie knew as soon as he’d heard his voice, and it made his chest hurt. He knew that sound from the thousands of times a much younger Eddie had broken down and ended up in his arms, shaking and sobbing.

Eddie had always tried so hard to hide it until his lip quivered and a single tear rolled down a freckled cheek. After that first tear, they would keep coming fast. When they were kids, Henry Bowers had gone on a particularly nasty spree, until one day he cornered Eddie in a bathroom stall after school. Bowers threatened Eddie and refused to let him leave until he said what he wanted him to say.

“C’mon you little faggot. Say it, say that’s what you are.”

That same day, Richie hadn’t been able to find Eddie outside after school, and got worried. Having checked all of their usual spots (the quarry, the barrens, the arcade, the ice cream shop), Richie eventually ended up at the other boy’s house. With no less disapproving looks than usual, Sonia Kasprak let him in. Upon entering Eddie’s room, Richie found him curled up in bed, facing the wall.

“Eds?”

The other boy had sniffed softly, his voice breaking. *“I hate it when you call me that.”*

Richie had smiled, and slowly made his way to sit down on the bed. He didn’t ask, didn’t pry, but he’d known that it was Bowers. Eddie took everything the bully did and processed it internalized it, and didn’t let it go for days. At that moment, Richie had decided what felt right was to gently put one hand on Eddie’s head. Eddie had giggled at the strangeness of the gesture, which was a welcome sound after the hurt silence that had preceded it. Richie laughed too, but left it there. Slowly, he ran his fingers through his friend’s hair. He played with it very gently, fingers brushing his scalp in a gesture of comfort. Eddie kept crying softly, the two sat like that for almost an hour. Then, Eddie finally rolled over to face him. He had given Richie a small smile, and drifted off to sleep.

But now, 27 years later, Eddie had dealt with so much more. Bowers and his knife had come back, but this time took a backseat to the rest of what Eddie had to fight. His demons had stopped being only metaphorical, and Richie’s as well. Now all of it seemed to finally be gone, but wounds were still healing.

So now, Richie sat on the phone, patiently waiting for Eddie to say something.

“I had another dream.” Eddie began slowly. His voice was quiet and a little scratchy from sleep.

Richie nodded, before realizing that Eddie couldn’t see him. *“I’m...*

I'm sorry. What happened this time?"

There was a silence. "Just a lot more fucking blood." Eddie's voice picked up in pace, as it did when he was anxious. "You know sometimes I think you all should have just left me down there, because then I wouldn't have to fucking live with this and you wouldn't all have to deal with me when I'm like this, crying like a fucking—"

"Hey, hey. Stop. Don't talk like that. I'm serious." Richie had been working on being gentle without talking down to Eddie. He wanted to make the other man feel heard, as much as possible. "You could have come up here, y'know? Or I could have come down. It's not like you're still living in New York." He gave a soft laugh. "I mean, I'm just a floor above you."

"Didn't wanna bother you."

"You're not bothering me, dumbass. I'm coming down there now, okay?"

"Rich, you don't have to. I just needed to call someone, so I could know what was real, and—" His voice broke off again. Richie could hear him inhale slowly.

"I understand, Eds. I do. Do you want me to come down? I'd be happy to." Richie was already getting up. He threw on a hoodie over his grey t-shirt and pajama pants, and was moving for his shoes.

"Yeah."

"Yeah. I'll be right there."

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Richie had only knocked twice when his friend quickly opened the door. Eddie stood there, his usually neat hair messy. He looked a little sweaty, more than a little sleep deprived, and his eyes were slightly red. He wore a soft t-shirt and sweatpants.

“Hey.”

“Hey.” Richie stood in the doorway like an idiot, not sure where to put his hands. When they were younger, maybe he would have gone right in for a hug, or an affectionate punch. There was a bit more of a distance now, which was only a result of time. Richie had spent years telling himself not to show even the slightest bit of affection towards other men, even a lingering touch on the shoulder made him feel dirty and guilty. As if he could cancel out the two dark nights in L.A., where he stumbled home with a nameless face from a bar. Both times, it had been a short man with dark eyes, who he could never bring himself to look directly at. And both mornings, he woke up alone with a headache, and rolled over to go back to sleep on the verge of tears.

He knew he was staring at Eddie now, and he couldn't bring himself to stop. He felt a little dizzy.

“Rich? You can come in.” Eddie spoke at a half-whisper, as if he didn't want to wake the other townhouse guests. Richie was fairly certain they were the only ones staying there.

“Right, yeah. I'm here.” Richie said it to Eddie, but it was partially to remind himself. He was actually standing there in Eddie's room, which it had taken him this long to actually visit. He followed the other man into the small room. Richie briefly looked around. It smelled warm and pleasant. There was a humidifier in the corner, and what could only be described as a buffet of vitamins and pills on the dresser. The amount of medications Eddie had been prescribed after his injury had seemed excessive, and his friends had all worried that it was a step backwards in any progress he'd made in terms of obsessive behavior. Eddie hadn't been in any position to turn down pain medicine, and Richie understood that he had to genuinely take care of his body, now more than ever. Still, he couldn't help but wonder about each tiny bottle, and what everything was for.

When he turned around, Eddie was seated on the edge of the bed, staring at the floor. Richie approached him slowly. He felt the need to make a joke, or to lighten the mood. “What's the status, Dr. K?” Richie sat down next to the other man. He watched a gentle smile reach Eddie's face, before it retreated into a sigh.

“Everything just won’t seem to leave me alone tonight. All of it, I just can’t forget.”

It was vague, but Richie understood. “Yeah, me too.”

They sat for a good thirty seconds, Eddie’s eyes on the floor, and Richie’s straight ahead in thought. Suddenly, Eddie’s shoulders began to shake. He was crying again, and let his head fall into his hands.

Richie’s heart sank. He acted on his very first instinct, which was to wrap both of his arms around Eddie’s shoulders, engulfing the smaller man in what resembled a tight hug. All Richie could think to do was hold him while he shook, Eddie’s body wracked with sobs that neither had seen since they were children.

Eddie’s body relaxed into Richie’s arms, his head falling onto his friend’s chest. Richie could feel the wet of tears against his shirt.

“I’m sorry.”

Richie shook his head. “No, no, stop. Don’t be sorry. I’ve got you.” He wanted to hold him tighter. He had no way of keeping Eddie safe from anything from their past. It was too much for Richie that Eddie had barely made it through if it weren’t for him. He’d saved him at the very last moment, dragging him out of the rubble of Neibolt, nearly bleeding out. Richie wanted to go back and do better, wanted to keep all those filthy things from every going near Eddie, but he couldn’t. All he could do was whisper that it was okay as Eddie cried into his chest.

Every single reservation Richie had about letting another man touch him so closely had faded to the back of his mind. Eddie had never been someone he’d put up a wall against. Eddie was the exception to all of his barriers, and Richie hurt to think of why that was. He knew he had to stop himself from pretending to still be clueless. Now Eddie was there. He was warm and he smelled like the same detergent he’d always used, mixed with sweat and heat and some gentle and feminine fragrance he’d been using for years. He was completely real and Richie felt like he could cry too.

And now he was. Fuck. He had his face buried in Eddie’s hair, and

simply held him there. Tears rolled silently down Richie's face. They sat in silence until Eddie finally stopped shaking. Richie couldn't figure out when they'd started breathing in unison, but they were, and both breathing deeply enough to pull themselves together. Richie closed his eyes, and they just sat.

It wasn't light outside yet, but the darkness was more manageable and comforting than before. They listened to a train pass in the distance, and Richie could picture the old rusty tracks where Eddie, Stan, and himself used to sit. He always used to lay pennies on the tracks, to see if the old copper would get flattened by the train when it passed.

"Richie, it's just improbable. The vibrations will knock it off the tracks before the train comes anyways." Stan always watched in annoyance, as Richie tried and failed again and again. *"What are you even gonna do with a flat penny?"*

"I just wanna see it happen, okay? Now shut up, I'll get it this time." Richie had crouched down, carefully balancing the coin. *"If the vibrations knock it off, I'll just run and put it back real fast. I'll be able to make it."*

That was when Eddie would always lecture him, his hand gesturing pointedly. *"You're gonna get hit by the train, dipshit."*

He'd never gotten the trick right. But on his birthday that year, Eddie made Richie hold out one hand. In it, the other boy placed a melted, warped penny, almost completely flat.

"Since you wanted it so bad. I asked Mike to take it to his shop class. He torched it, so I guess it's sorta from him. But I'm the one who hammered the shit out of it."

Richie grinned at the memory. He reached for his glasses and ungracefully pulled them off his face. He attempted to toss them onto Eddie's nightstand, but missed by a few inches and heard them clatter onto the ground. Eddie sat up and began to laugh, Richie joining by giving a snort.

“Screw being able to see, right?”

“That was a fucking terrible throw.”

“Doesn’t matter though. Guess I can be blind. The lights are always off anyways when your mom and I-”

“ Shut up, asshole.” Eddie gave him a shove, and stood up off the bed. “I swear, I’ll go over there and stomp on your stupid glasses.”

“Hey, whoah, Eds, I was kidding. I need them to read. How else would I be able to give Big Bill shit for his next ending?”

“Honestly, just assume it’ll be bad.” Eddie was up rummaging through his dresser. He was smiling now, just sniffing occasionally. Ever since they’d all come back a few months ago, Eddie got pissed if anyone brought up his signs of weakness or tears after the fact. He had already lived with one hovering parent, two if Myra counted, and did not need six more asking if he was okay. No matter how much Eddie loved his friends, he’d put up a bit of a defensive wall when he felt he was being a burden for too long. So Richie decided to let it go. Still, his chest felt hot in the place where Eddie’s head had been.

“Do you want something to drink?” Eddie pulled a half-full whiskey bottle from his top drawer where he’d been digging.

“Jesus. Uh, yeah, sure. Sounds good.” Richie ran a hand through his hair. It had been a long night, and somehow hard alcohol at 4:00 am didn’t seem like the worst idea. Richie had had much wilder mornings. That is, if wild meant being lonely, drunk off his ass, staring at his computer and jerking off until he was able to stop thinking and finally sleep.

“I don’t have cups or anything. It’s been just me til now, so I’ve been drinking out of the bottle.” Eddie walked towards the bed, whiskey in hand.

Richie reclined on the bed, an arm behind his head. He was finally making himself comfortable. “Dude, since when are you okay with sharing drinks? I feel like you’re gonna ask me to ‘waterfall’ it or whatever.”

Eddie finished taking a drink, wincing just a little at the strength of it. He always did that, and had since they were teenagers. He shrugged. "I've waded through shit-filled water. Twice. Not too worried about your germs anymore, Rich."

Richie snorted. "Yeah, you should be so lucky as to get these germs. There's comedy fans all over the country who would kill for a piece of this."

"Whatever. Just take the fucking bottle, Trashmouth."

"You better hope this Trashmouth isn't contagious, if we're gonna be sharing." Richie grinned as he screwed the cap off. He took a couple of large gulps with the suspicious ease of someone on the brink of alcoholism. If anyone were to ask, Richie would swear he was fine.

His body immediately felt overwhelmingly hot, and he had felt warm since he walked in. He laughed it off, as usual, smiling at his friend.

"Eds, do you remember the first time we all got you drunk?"

Eddie groaned and fell back on the bed. "Oh, don't remind me. There was some singing and dancing involved, wasn't there?"

"Yeah, Bev's house. When her dad was gone. I seem to remember a bit of drunken angry ranting as well?"

Eddie covered his face with a hand. "God, probably. Something about Greta Bowie. Wonder if she ever stopped being a bitch."

"You're such an angry little man. Always were." Richie ruffled Eddie's hair, causing Eddie to smack his hand away. "Case in point. Also, dude, we all knew you'd be a lightweight. You're built like a woodland elf."

"First of all, fuck off. Second, I can handle it now." To prove his point, Eddie made a grabby hand for the whiskey, which Richie handed him. The man took another large pull, this time barely wincing at all.

"Okay, I get it little guy."

“Okay, you big...loser.”

“Wow, good one.”

Eddie grinned, and pushed the bottle back towards Richie. “But yeah, uh, I’ve become a bit of an expert on what gets me drunk quickest.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah, I mean, If you knew what it was like for me in New York, it’d make sense.”

The air changed. New York. Myra. Eddie immediately looked like he regretted bringing it up, his hand fidgeting with the pillow next to him. Richie didn’t know what to say.

“I’m sorry Eddie.”

“Don’t be.”

They sat in silence. Eddie was still laying down, and he stared out the window despite it being too dark to see anything. Richie took another quick pull of whiskey before screwing the lid back on and placing it on the nightstand.

He wanted Eddie to talk to him about it. He never really had, and when he did it was just when Richie gave him shit about it. It was different now. Richie knew it was. While he himself could joke about everything that made him sad or uncomfortable, Eddie’s methods were more along the lines of A: shut down, or B: anxious fast-paced ramble. And neither were happening. Richie just wanted Eddie to look at him.

Richie kicked his shoes off, and swung his legs up onto the bed. He carefully made his way to sit all the way on, until he was able to lie down next to Eddie. There was a safe distance between them. He heard Eddie’s soft breathing, but wasn’t touching him. It was comfortable, and it was fine. Richie just slightly turned to face the other man, while Eddie’s gaze stayed to his new focus on the ceiling.

“I’m leaving her.”

Richie stared. Eddie's expression didn't change.

"Myra, I mean. I can't do it anymore. I only called her a few days ago, I couldn't even tell her anything. I couldn't. Do you know how fucking hard it is to be with anyone who hasn't seen what we've seen?"

Richie didn't know. He'd been alone.

Eddie continued, his voice picking up pace. "So I told her I was leaving. Just like that. She didn't understand. She cried, she- I feel like the villain. And maybe I am, but *fuck* ." Tears were welling up in his eyes. "It's better, it's better like this. I had to tell her. I don't know. When I was with her, everything felt the same as when I was a kid. But only like, the bad parts. The pills, the crowding, the smothering, and my mom. My fucking mom."

He was shaking again, just the slightest bit. Richie was afraid to reach out and touch Eddie, like somehow he'd make it worse. His head was spinning and his heart was beating fast. He didn't know what to say. But Eddie spoke first.

"And when I'm with you guys, I'm a kid again too. But it's...well, it's the good parts." He was still staring at the ceiling.

"Do you still have to go back there?" That was the first sentence that Richie could form. His voice was quiet and hoarse.

"Yeah." Eddie closed his eyes. "Next weekend. There are papers to sign, and some more of my old clothes. That's it."

"Oh."

The silence filled the room. Eddie's tears were quiet and still this time. He looked tired. Richie watched his face, his breathing, and tried to think of how to reach him. After about ten quiet minutes, Eddie finally rolled to face him.

"It doesn't matter, though."

"Course it matters."

Eddie shrugged, huffing out a doubtful laugh.

“Hey, hey- look at me.”

Eddie’s dark eyes, always so intense, met his.

“It does matter. It does. But look, you did it.” Richie reached out a hand to place it on Eddie’s arm. He hoped that what he was saying made sense the way it did in his own head. “You made it out of there dude, and now you’re making it out of this. It’s never gonna be like, an easy thing, you know?”

Eddie glanced at the hand on his arm for the briefest of seconds. Richie could feel him relax into the touch.

“Yeah. Maybe.”

“Definitely. I told you you were brave. This is the shit I’m talking about.”

Eddie closed his eyes. His smile was soft. There was pain behind it, and they both knew that would take a while to go away.

“Thanks, Rich. Thank you. I mean it.”

Richie returned his smile. Eddie was breathing deeply again, and was finally letting tiredness overtake him. Richie didn’t say anything for a while, until he looked at the clock.

“Shit, it’s late. I mean, or early.”

Eddie didn’t open his eyes. “Yeah. Could you go turn off the light?” His voice was sleepy.

“Yeah for sure, I should go to sleep too.” Richie rolled off the bed, and reached for his shoes. He began to put them on, already planning his routine of showering once he got back to his room, and looking for semblance of sleep.

“Where are you going?” Eddie’s sleepy voice mumbled from the bed.

“What do you mean, I’m-“ Richie glanced at him, laughing a little in

confusion. "I'm going to bed. You said it's late, you're right. I'm going back upstairs. If you need anything, just call me, okay?"

"You don't have to go back up."

"What?"

"I said you don't have to go back up, dumbass."

Richie froze. "I mean, I can- "

"Please." Eddie's eyes were open now. His voice was quiet and groggy. "We don't know what kind of shit either of us is gonna dream about. I just...I think would be better if you stayed? Unless, I mean, if you don't- uh, it's okay."

"I can stay." Richie's mouth was dry. "I can definitely stay if you want me to."

"Okay." Eddie burrowed back into the covers. "Just shut the light off."

"Sure thing." Richie felt like he was moving in slow motion as he walked to the light switch. He dropped his shoes by the door and hit the lights. In the darkness he could see the shape of Eddie rolling to face the wall, clearly almost asleep. Richie exhaled and made his way to the bed.

Crawling into the covers next to the other man felt strange, only because it had been so long. They had slept in the same bed as kids at sleepovers. But Richie had had a long time to forget what that closeness felt like. The bed wasn't small, and there was space between them. Still, Eddie's weight was there next to him, and Richie quickly felt the closest to sleep that he had all night.

2. Chapter 2

Summary for the Chapter:

It's morning, and Richie goes to leave.

It was fully light out when Richie opened his eyes the next morning. His brain recalibrated enough to register that Eddie was laying next to him.

The other man was still asleep, lying on his back with one arm above his head. His mouth was slightly open. Richie smiled at how peaceful he looked. The usual worry lines were gone from his face. They had both slept through the night in complete peace, or if Richie had had dreams, he didn't recall any of them.

He felt weird for just watching Eddie sleep now, listening to him breathe. Maybe it was just nice to see him finally resting, appearing happy and soft even for a moment.

Richie tore his eyes away and turned over, debating getting up. He had been planning on calling his manager today, explaining when he thought he could start a new tour. If ever. It was the type of complicated that he just didn't even bother explaining, to which his manager didn't pry, but seemed vaguely distressed. Still, they had agreed to talk soon.

Richie huffed a sigh and rolled out of the bed. He was immediately thirsty and he knew there were phantom traces of alcohol on his breath, so he poked his head into Eddie's bathroom. Upon entering, he closed the door the majority of the way, not bothering to lock it. The fake marble sink counter had even more pills and products, along with shaving cream, razors, hair gel, and mouthwash. With some amusement at the thought of what Eddie would do to him if he found out Richie looked for and used his toothbrush, Richie opted to simply use some of the mouthwash. It was unlikely that his friend would mind, and he knew that Eddie would end up giving him shit for morning breath if they had woken up at the same time.

After spitting it into the sink, Richie caught his own eyes in the

mirror. *Jesus, I look old*, he thought, running a hand down his face. He figured he'd shave later that day. He splashed some cold water on his face, wiping it on his hoodie. The dark circles weren't as bad as they'd been. Still, Richie hadn't felt attractive or desirable in a long time, if ever.

He knew it was time to go back to his own room, to get out of Eddie's hair. Richie left the bathroom and headed for his shoes by the door. He heard the rustling of the bed that indicated Eddie waking up. He heard him stretch and give a quiet groan. "Morning."

"Morning Eds. Sorry if I woke you up. Turns out I'm a very loud person, or so it has been explained to me."

Eddie laughed. "I heard you spit in the sink. You headed out?"

"Yeah." Richie finished tying his shoe and stood to face the other man. "Gotta go call my manager, I've been avoiding it."

Eddie nodded. "Sounds shitty."

"Probably will end up putting it off again today. We'll see." He picked up his glasses and put them on, before he headed to the door and stepped out into the hallway. As he moved, he heard Eddie getting up.

"Richie, wait, uh-"

He stopped, and lingered outside as Eddie approached him. The other man made his way to stand in the doorway, nervously meeting Richie's eyes. "Thanks. For like, dealing with me last night I mean." He gave a soft laugh. "It was messy, it was dumb, I know."

"Are you kidding? 'Course, buddy. Whenever. " Richie put a hand on his shoulder. "Stop calling everything dumb though, okay? You know how often I cry about shit? It's a lot." He gave Eddie an affectionate punch on the shoulder. "You're okay. I'll see you later."

The other man nodded and looked down. "Yeah. Well, thanks again. I mean it."

Eddie looked like he was about to say something else. He paused, and

instead took one step closer, into the hallway. Richie followed him with his eyes, confused.

Eddie exhaled, then quickly leaned up to press his lips to Richie's cheek. It was a slow, gentle kiss. He pulled away, and looked up at Richie, trying to gauge a reaction.

All at once, Richie's face flooded with heat, and his heart raced. His brain had short-circuited. It was the simplest gesture, but it was so much more than he'd felt in so long. Just a kiss on the cheek. But Eddie had never done that before, it wasn't something normal, and what the *fuck* did it mean right now?

Richie stared at him, but before he could say anything, Eddie stepped back. "Okay, well, I'll um...see you later." And with that, he stepped back into his room and quietly shut the door behind him.

Richie stood in the hallway alone, dumbly staring at the door. *Fuck*.

He thought of last night, when Eddie was crying. Richie remembered having the urge to gently kiss his forehead, or his shoulder. When they were fourteen, Richie remembered having the urge to hold him as close as possible. Then, he'd never kissed anyone. Every time he'd thought about kissing Eddie he'd convince himself it wasn't that, that he didn't want to, it was something else, it always had to be something else. Something friendly, warm, and *allowed*. Something that didn't cause people to shun him, hate him, and yell at him. He'd tell himself it didn't matter and it would go away, and that one day he'd understand it. Richie hadn't been able to stop and *look* at Eddie because there had always been something chasing them.

But now everything was holding still.

Richie needed to know what was going on. He had to go back inside. Fuck the phone call, *fuck* talking to his manager. It didn't mean shit in that moment, all he wanted to do was knock and go back in.

He walked right up to Eddie's door and moved to knock, but in that

moment, the door flew open before he could touch it. Eddie stood in the doorway, his cheeks flushed a bright pink. Richie didn't understand how the other man knew he hadn't left yet, or how they had made the simultaneous decision to stop the other from getting away in that- moment.

They began talking at the exact time.

"Eddie, I wanted to just-"

"Richie I-"

They stopped, and simply stared at each other. Eddie gave a nervous laugh, which he was notorious for. Richie wiped his own forehead, where he was sweating just slightly. Then, he took one step towards Eddie, into the doorway. The shorter man sized him up, and stepped forward as well, one eyebrow raised. It was a challenge. Richie's heartbeat was out of control, so loud that he swore Eddie could hear it. Richie closed his eyes, putting himself together to the best of his abilities.

While he had his eyes closed, he heard Eddie take the last step closer. He felt two hands come to rest on his shoulders, and involuntarily, instinctually, he wrapped his arms around Eddie's waist. When Richie realized what he'd done, his eyes flew open. He tried to jerk his arms away, off of Eddie, afraid he'd done something wrong and completely out of bounds. But Eddie caught his wrists, and gently placed Richie's hands back onto him.

Richie looked into Eddie's eyes again, as the smaller man looked up at him. His eyes were warm and kind, but he looked ridiculously nervous. Still, a small smile crossed Eddie's face, and he whispered. "Do it, Rich." It was almost inaudible. "Please."

"Do..." Richie was shaking, his mouth was dry. "I mean, what do you-" He paused when Eddie's hand came up to hold the side of his face.

The world fell completely silent as Eddie leaned up and pressed his lips into Richie's.

Just one kiss, only a few seconds. Richie felt the warmth of his lips, and Eddie's rapidly beating heart. He closed his eyes and leaned into it, until Eddie gently pulled away.

"That." Eddie whispered, his hand still resting on Richie's jaw. "That's what I wanted you to do."

"Oh."

"I'm going to do it again. You can stop me."

"I won't." Richie replied instantly. He knew he was speaking too fast. He took a deep breath, and slowed down. "I...I won't. Please. Don't stop"

Eddie nodded. He ran his hand down the side of Richie's neck, then down the front of his chest. Both of his hands moved to grip onto Richie's hoodie, which used to pull him back in.

It was much more desperate this time. It was deeper. Eddie kissed Richie's mouth once, then again, and didn't stop. Richie's brain caught up and he was quickly kissing back. He was relieved. It was too much but not enough at all, he could feel how much more he wanted the second he felt Eddie's tongue brush against his own. He felt a moan escape him, one that was embarrassingly needy.

Eddie began to step backwards, pulling Richie into the room with him. Richie followed, barely breaking the kiss. As soon as the door shut behind him, Eddie gently pushed Richie up against it. His hands were everywhere on Richie, running up his chest, across his broad shoulders, and eventually settling in his hair. Richie's hands roamed nervously, gripping Eddie's waist tightly, and traveling incredibly close to his ass.

"Richie." Eddie moaned, breaking away from the kiss just slightly. "Richie, is this all okay? Are you okay?"

"Yes. God, yes." Richie whispered. "Just- please. Don't stop kissing me."

Eddie immediately obliged, his lips pressing into the other man's neck. Richie gave what could only be described as a whine, and

fumbled to grab onto Eddie's back. The height difference caused Eddie to feel completely enveloped by the larger man, and it turned him on enough that he was sure Richie could feel how hard he was against his leg.

Eddie gasped quietly as he felt Richie's own hardness pressed against his hips and stomach, insistent, hot, and right up against him. He instantly pushed his hips right up against the taller man's. Richie gave a low moan at the contact, and Eddie grinned. They kissed again, wet and open mouthed, Richie involuntarily grinding his hips into him.

They were making out like teenagers, or at least like two forty year olds who had never kissed someone like they meant it. It was too much, it was everything, and Richie wanted more.

"Eddie, Eddie, god, *please* ." He whined, bucking his hips.

"What is it, Richie? Anything, anything. Just tell me."

"Eddie..." There were suddenly tears in his eyes, which he couldn't stop.

"Hey, hey, what is it?" Eddie pulled back, his hands on Richie's face. He ran his thumb in gentle circles. "It's okay, it's okay. We can stop."

Richie put his hands on Eddie's face as well, mirroring him. He traced the deep scar on Eddie's cheek with his finger, memorizing the shape. "No, don't wanna stop. That's the last thing I want to-" He paused, a tear running down his face. "It's just so much. You're just really here, and you're okay, and..." He took a deep breath. "Eddie I... I have *always* ..."

"I know." Eddie laid his head on Richie's chest. "I have too. I *do* ." He squeezed his eyes tight, pulling the other man as close as possible.

Richie kissed the top of his head. He sniffed, wiped his eyes, and sighed, kissing it again and then lifting Eddie's chin to kiss his lips.

Eddie smiled up at him, tears in his own eyes as he brushed away one of Richie's. "We're here. I'm okay. We can take care of each other,

okay?”

Richie nodded.

Eddie pressed their foreheads together. “I’m gonna take care of you.” he repeated, his voice just above a whisper. “I want to make you feel good. Do you want to go lie down on the bed for me?”

Richie gave a shuddering breath. “Yeah.” At any other time, maybe Eddie would have made fun of the way his voice cracked. But now he just smiled.

Eddie led him over to the bed, where Richie kicked off his shoes and sat down. He was unable to stop staring as the smaller man stood in front of him, who hesitated, before pulling off his white t-shirt. It got caught awkwardly on his arms before he shook it to the ground, which made Richie laugh.

Eddie smiled. “Shut up.”

And Richie did, when he got his first full look at a shirtless Eddie standing right in front of him. Eddie was small, he always had been. But he was strong and beautiful, and somehow Richie could have predicted that he wouldn’t have any body hair. Most noticeable, of course, was the massive scar through his middle. It had gone a softer pink and white than the angry red of before. It was stretched thin over Eddie’s frame, and Richie noticed him move to cover it a bit with his hand after noticing Richie’s eyes lingering on it.

“You don’t need to hide it.” Richie moved forward on the bed, inviting Eddie to step closer or sit down with him. Eddie chose to kneel on the bed, and moved so that he was fully straddling Richie. Richie inhaled sharply at the new development, but kept his eyes locked on Eddie.

“I didn’t want it to freak you out. You hadn’t seen it before.” His hands were in Richie’s hair, stroking gently.

“I was there when it happened. I saw everything.”

His words made Eddie pause. “Yeah. I’m...I’m sorry Richie.”

Richie shook his head. “No. It’s healed now, it’s closed. That’s why I’m happy to see it.” To emphasize, he touched it lightly, brushing his fingers softly across. Eddie shivered. With another gentle brush of his thumb, he went to kiss Eddie’s collarbone, his neck, then right at his jawline. He was finally beginning to relax into really being there, actually getting to kiss the man he’d wanted for so long. He mumbled something else to Eddie, which went unheard.

“What’d you say Rich?” Eddie was breathless, gripping at the other man’s hair.

“I said, uh.” Richie laughed nervously. “You look good. Like, really *really* good.”

“So do you.”

Richie snorted. “I’ve looked better. And not even by much.”

“I mean it.” Eddie gently removed Richie’s glasses, setting them on the nightstand. Richie watched him, mesmerized.

“I saw you on TV before I remembered you. And then I saw you at the restaurant.” Eddie continued. “I like your little bit of facial hair, I like the clothes you wear. Your voice is sexy, and your shoulders, your hands...god, Richie, you’re just so *big* .” He pushed Richie’s hoodie off of his shoulders then, running his hand down his torso as he continued to straddle him.

Richie decided to let go of the dick joke he was formulating in his head. Instead, he simply rolled his hips up against Eddie’s ass, letting him feel the hard line of his erection. Eddie gave a little sigh, grinding back against it.

“I’ve always been big, Eds. I’m taller than you anyways, which isn’t difficult.”

Eddie rolled his eyes. Richie couldn’t keep his mouth shut even now.

“And yeah, maybe I’ve put on just a little weight, but you know, I’m fucking *forty* , so-”

“It looks sexy on you.” Eddie pushed his hips harder against him, and

Richie's mouth fell open. "I really just meant that you're tall, you're strong, and you look like you could really just take me and-" He stopped, wondering if he'd gone too far.

"And what?"

"I guess we'll see. Take your shirt off."

Richie scrambled to do as he was told. With Eddie's help, his grey t-shirt was off and tossed across the room in seconds flat. Eddie's hands were on his chest right away, mapping it with his hands. Richie had a significant amount more hair on his chest and stomach than the other man, and Eddie seemed to like what he saw.

"See, Rich? You're hot. You're so hot. Jesus."

Richie huffed a laugh, which turned into a groan. Eddie's lips traveled past his neck to his chest, across one nipple, down to his stomach, and settled right above the waistline of his pants. Eddie kept pressing slow, open-mouthed kisses there. He moved his hand to hover near the large bulge in the front of Richie's pajama pants, and hesitated slightly before wrapping his hand around it through the thin material.

"*Fuck* ." Richie's voice hissed out above him. He moved his hips, chasing the friction.

Eddie looked up at him. "Can I?" he whispered. "Is this okay?"

Richie's hand wound into the back of Eddie's hair. "Eds, if you don't keep touching me, I'll lose it, I'll-"

At that confirmation, Eddie cut him off by pressing his lips to Richie's erection through the fabric. Richie let out a whimper, tugging hard on the other man's hair. Eddie kept mouthing at it, slow and warm. He could feel Richie's dick twitch once or twice as he teased at it, pressing lightly enough to drive him crazy. Eventually, Eddie figured they'd both waited long enough. Years and years too long.

He tugged at the elastic of Richie's waistband, signaling him to help pull them down. Richie obliged, visibly shaking and the most aroused he had ever been. Eddie wrapped a hand around his now exposed

cock. Richie's head fell back.

"Richie."

"Hh.."

Eddie laughed at the nonsensical noise. "*Richie.*" He reemphasized, hand squeezing just slightly, lips hovering above the other man's already leaking length.

"Y...yeah?" Richie sat up a little, his breath catching at the sight of Eddie's mouth so close to him.

"Can I- fuck. Uh.."

Richie found Eddie to be adorably embarrassed and shy for someone who was kneeling between his close friend's legs, ready to blow him at any second.

Eddie finally found his words. "I wanna suck your dick. I've wanted to for a while. Um. Can I?"

Richie's hips jerked involuntarily. "I really think I'll die if you don't."

Eddie smiled, and promptly ran his tongue from base to head, before swallowing most of it at once. A loud groan was ripped from Richie's chest, loud enough that Richie slapped a hand over his own mouth, embarrassed. Eddie pulled off, a string of saliva briefly connecting them.

"Don't." Eddie said softly. "Don't cover your mouth, I like hearing you."

Richie nodded vigorously, using his hand to guide Eddie's head back between his legs. "Whatever you say, Eddie Spaghetti."

Eddie pulled back again. "Fuck you, I regret saying that already. If you call me Eddie Spaghetti while I'm sucking your cock, I swear to god-"

Richie chuckled, stroking the other man's hair. "What do you want me to call you instead, Eduardo?"

Eddie rolled his eyes. “Beep beep, Richie.” he mumbled, before sinking his mouth back down until Richie’s cock hit the back of his throat.

Richie gave a strangled noise, his hips jerking again. He was deep enough in Eddie’s throat that when he moved, the man below him gagged, choking on it.

“Fuck, sorry Eds.”

Eddie only moaned, never even pulling off. *Jesus*, Richie thought. *He probably liked that.* Eddie kept his head bobbing, a little faster and rougher than before. It was noisy, and it made Richie feel seconds away from cumming. He was embarrassed at how fast it had been, but Eddie was *good*. There was no way it was his first time doing this. Richie knew New York was hard, and could only imagine what a desperate and lonely Eddie might have been up to. He was surprised at the momentary pain that he felt at the thought of Eddie with any other men. Men who might have denied him what he deserved, who might have treated him badly.

But Eddie was there. With him. It was just the two of them completely alone as the sun was out, shining warmly into the window. Richie looked down and watched Eddie, soft lips tightly around his length. Eddie’s hair was messy, his eyes closed. He looked gorgeous and wrecked, half naked between Richie’s legs. He only had to move a bit longer, hollowing out his cheeks, before Richie could feel his body tightening up. A rush of extreme pleasure was building to release at any second, and he couldn’t stop watching the mesmerizing sight below him.

“Fuck, Eddie, I’m already gonna-” Richie choked. Eddie looked up at him and sped up his movement, hand jerking where his mouth couldn’t reach. Their eyes directly met, and Richie couldn’t stand it any longer. He was about to cum down Eddie’s throat, when Eddie pulled off. Richie’s hips bucked up to the absence of where the other man’s mouth had been.

“Rich.” Eddie’s hands trailed down his thighs. “I want you to finish on me. My face, my lips, my tongue...everywhere. Please.”

“Jesus *Christ*. ” Richie wrapped a desperate hand around his own cock, stroking at a rapid pace. “Yeah, I can do that. Fuck, open your mouth.”

Eddie did as he was told, staring up with his dark eyes. His mouth was open, his tongue out just the slightest bit. He looked obscene, and absolutely gorgeous. As Richie jerked off inches from his face, the head of his cock would occasionally brush Eddie’s lips, or the side of his face.

Finally, he was cumming, moaning out short gasps. “Eddie. *Eddie*. ” was all he could say. One hot pulse landed on Eddie’s tongue, the second missing and dripping off his lips, and the third hitting his cheek. Richie’s full body shuddered as he stroked himself through the aftershocks. He watched in awe while Eddie took him thumb and brushed whatever had missed his mouth past his lips, and caught it with his tongue. He looked like he was wanted every last drop, and his eyes were closed in bliss.

Richie watched Eddie’s every move. He laughed breathlessly. “Fuck, I remember the Eddie who was afraid of getting dirty.”

Eddie’s face flushed even more, and he shrugged with a soft smile. He moved back up the bed, laying on top of the other man and wrapping his arms around him. “Kiss me.” he whispered.

Richie’s lips were on his in an instant. He could taste himself on Eddie’s tongue, which was probably the dirtiest, most intimate thing he’d ever done. But still, nothing would feel as intimate as the simple kiss on the cheek that Eddie had given him earlier. Something about that was so soft, close, and loving. To mirror it, Richie pulled away and gave Eddie a kiss on his cheek, right next to his scar. Eddie stared at him for a second, happy but slightly confused. Then, the realization dawned on him, and he gave that shy little smile.

“I’m so happy you’re here.” Richie whispered. He kissed Eddie hard, making the other man whimper. “You look so beautiful.”

Eddie turned his head away, embarrassed. “Rich, I’m not.” He laughed nervously. “I could have been, but too much has happened. I’m-”

“Hey. Stop. Look at me.” Richie guided Eddie’s face back near his. “You are. Please, let me do something for you?” To make the other man understand what he meant, he trailed his hand to Eddie’s lower back, around, and up the side of his thigh.

Eddie closed his eyes, leaning further into the touch. He nodded slowly. He shifted off of Richie’s lap as Richie pulled his own pajama pants back up and gently laid Eddie on his back.

Richie took a deep breath, deciding what he should do. There were a million things he wanted. He would be entirely content to just lay together, stroking Eddie’s hair and talking to him until it was dark out. *Maybe later*, he thought, as his eye was drawn again to the obvious tent in the front of Eddie’s sweatpants. He felt ridiculous at the fact that his mouth was watering. He acted on his first impulse.

“Um. Is it okay if I pull your pants down?” Richie knew he was asking awkwardly. Somehow he was more afraid to touch Eddie than he was for Eddie to touch him. He felt scared to mess things up, to ruin someone so perfect.

“Yeah, dumbass. I want you to.” Eddie spoke quietly. He lifted his hips slightly, and grabbed Richie’s hand. He guided it to his waistband and let go. Richie took the cue and inched the other man’s sweatpants down.

Eddie was hard and red and leaking, and the perfect size. Richie was positive that every part of him was perfect.

“What do you want me to do?” Richie breathed, hands hovering awkwardly at Eddie’s waist.

Eddie shifted his hips a bit and gave Richie a quick but dirty kiss. “That’s a pretty big question.” he said, his hand back in Richie’s messy hair. “I want you to stay here with me until we fall asleep.” He kissed Richie again, then leaned in close to his ear. “I want you to fuck me, long and hard, so I can feel everything I’ve missed.” He whispered. “And...I want you to come back to New York with me.”

Richie closed his eyes. “Eddie. I’ll do anything.”

Eddie whimpered, holding Richie's face and pressing their foreheads together. "Richie," he whispered, breathlessly. "For now, can you..." He reached for Richie's hand again, and guided it to between his legs.

Richie nodded, quickly. Not knowing what else to do, he spit in his hand, earning a laugh from Eddie.

"Really romantic, Rich."

"Damn right." Richie wrapped one big hand around Eddie's length, and slowly began to stroke. The man beneath him moaned loudly and the slightest touch.

"*Fuck, Richie.*" Eddie began squirming as Richie quickly picked up the pace. "Feels so good, please..."

"What do you need? Anything."

"Kiss me again. I just need you."

Richie leaned in and captured his lips hard. Eddie arched up into him, body drawn tight and flushed all over. They were both a mess, half naked and sweaty with most of the townhouse bed's pillow having fallen to the floor. Richie wanted to fuck him, to watch Eddie ride and make himself feel good. He wanted to take him on his back like this, to bury his face in Eddie's hair while he pushed into him and made him whimper and moan like he was now, but louder. Richie imagined it all as he looked into the other man's eyes, still stroking him quickly. He knew in that moment that he'd probably cry the first time if he ever fucked Eddie, and he was fine with that. It was perfect.

Without warning, Eddie already began to breathe faster, hands reaching up to grip at Richie's back. "You're gonna make me..." He couldn't finish his sentence before he was twitching, crying out, and cumming all over Richie's fist. His breath came out rapid and shaky, and Richie kissed him again and again.

Eddie held him so close as he came down, not letting Richie go. His face was buried in Richie's neck, and he heaved out what sounded

like a sob.

“Hey hey, you alright?” Richie whispered against the other man’s hair.

Slowly, Eddie nodded. “Fuck. Yes. I’m really, *really* good.” His hair was a mess, and he looked sleepy, dazed, and beautiful. They lay in a comfortable silence for a moment, before Eddie pulled back, looking at Richie.

“This isn’t some big joke is it? You, being here, staying with me, I...I don’t know.”

Richie frowned, rolling onto his back. He guided Eddie to come lay with him in the new position, and the other man followed and laid his head on Richie’s chest. “How would it be a joke dude? That wouldn’t be funny. And you know, *all* my jokes are funny.”

“Sure they are.” Eddie’s eyes were closed contentedly, and he ran a hand up Richie’s bare chest. It was soothing and rhythmic.

“I get it though. I mean, I thought the same thing. I thought you were messing with me.” Richie admitted. “I thought that after you kissed me you’d call me a name, do something to hurt me, disappear. I don’t know. Something like that. It’s stupid.”

“Yeah it is. Why would I do that to you?”

“Don’t know.”

Eddie looked up at him. “Nobody’s gonna do anything to you. You know that, right? We’re safe. Like, actually safe.” He touched Richie’s face, gentle and kind. “And Bill, Ben, Mike, Bevvie...they’re all gonna be so fucking proud of you.” *Of us*, was implied, but never spoken.

“Maybe.”

“You don’t have to believe me yet.” Eddie’s weight was warm on his chest. “Will you stay here though? Just like, a little longer.”

“Of course.” Richie didn’t have any intention of leaving that bed ever again unless he had to.

“Dinner, later? Wanna go somewhere? I’ll be hungry.”

Richie smirked. “Eds, really thought you’d be full. You were pretty eager to swallow about twenty minutes ago.”

“Shut the fuck up, you’re so annoying.” Eddie gave him a kick.

“I really am. But you love me.”

Eddie registered what Richie had said to him a million times before, which he always brushed off in annoyance. This time his answer was quiet and simple.

“Yeah. I do. Always have.”

Notes for the Chapter:

WOOO sorry this took me so long to finish, I had finals and then was traveling home. This is as sad and soft as I can make pure smut. There was supposed to be a sort of give and take of them comforting one another, since they have really been through it all and need to learn how to show each other they care in new ways. love them. always leave comments if you have any!

Author's Note:

Title is from Polyhymnia by Keaton Henson. Chapter 2 is coming in the next few days! I have a plan.